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Facing Death and Rethinking Inheritance: A Legacy Beyond Money

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I almost died. It's strange how those words feel—heavy and hollow all at once. One moment, life was routine, predictable, and the next, I was staring at twisted metal, breathing through pain, and wondering, "What if this had been it?"

That car accident shook me to my core. It wasn't just the physical impact; it was the flood of questions that followed. If I had died that day, what would I have left behind for my kids? Not just in terms of property or money, but in values, memories, and purpose.

I thought about inheritance—not the kind you can touch, but the kind that shapes who we become. Would money make their lives easier? Maybe. But would it truly help them, or would it rob them of the lessons that built me?

I remembered my grandfather, the man who taught me about work, pride, and purpose. I was three years old, barely tall enough to see over the stack of firewood we'd just cut up in the mountains. He gave me a job—small hands lifting each piece, one by one, stacking them as neatly as I could manage. When I finished, I looked up at him, eyes wide with hope, and asked, "Grandpa, am I a good worker?"

His face softened, a smile breaking through his rough, weathered features. He placed a hand on my shoulder, looked me right in the eyes, and said, "Ryan, you are a great worker. I am proud of you."

That moment shaped me. It was more than praise; it was purpose. I mattered because I contributed. I was valuable because I worked hard. That memory is worth more than any inheritance check could ever be.

When I thought about my kids, I realized that was the greatest gift I could ever give them—a sense of purpose, a work ethic, and memories of time spent together, working side by side.

I've always tried to give them that. Not money or things, but experiences. We've built things together, fixed what was broken, and made something out of nothing. We've worked with our hands, sweated under the sun, and laughed through the dirt and dust. I wanted them to understand that satisfaction doesn't come from what's handed to you, but from what you earn.

The accident made me question everything I thought about inheritance. Would leaving them money or property help them, or would it hinder their growth? I realized I didn't want them to rely on a windfall. I wanted them to stand on their own two feet, just like I had.

I thought back to when my father sat me down, not long before he passed. He was practical, straightforward, and honest. He told me about his will—how he was splitting his property and assets three ways. A house in Delta, another in Springville, some land, a four-wheeler, a truck—it would've been a decent chunk of change.

But I told him no. Not out of pride, but out of purpose. I didn't need it. I wanted to earn my own way, to make my own life, and to learn the hard lessons that come from struggling and failing and trying again. Sure, the money could've helped. I could've invested it, grown it, made my life easier. But at what cost?

If I had taken the easy road, I might not have learned to fall and get back up. I wouldn't have discovered the grit it takes to push through failure or the pride that comes from knowing every inch of progress was mine. Those lessons are priceless. They shaped me, just as I hope they'll shape my kids.

I do have some property—pieces of land in California and a place in Maine. And yes, I'll pass those on to my kids, but not as a blank check. If they sell, 60% goes to charity, and they each get just 10%. It's not to be harsh, but to teach them to value what they have, to use it wisely, and to share it responsibly.

I want them to have more than just money. I want them to have experiences—vacations, refuge when times are tough, and places to gather and grow. I want them to work together, to maintain and cherish these properties, not just for themselves but for the generations to come.

The accident was a reminder of how fragile life is. It made me realize that even without a big inheritance, they'll be okay. I've given them the tools they need—work ethic, purpose, and a sense of responsibility. Those are the things that last. Those are the things that build legacies.

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I miss my father. I always will. But I don't miss the inheritance I turned down because the real gift he gave me wasn't money. It was the example of hard work, honesty, and independence. It was the lesson that what matters most isn't what you leave behind but how you live.

So, as I look at my kids, I hope they remember the days we spent working together, the lessons learned from scraped knuckles and sunburns, and the pride that comes from a job well done. I hope they see that wealth isn't measured by what's in the bank but by what's in your heart and your hands.

That's the legacy I want to leave. Not money, but meaning. Not property, but purpose. Not things, but time.

Because in the end, the greatest inheritance isn't wealth—it's wisdom. It's not about giving them what I earned but teaching them how to earn their own.

References:

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the ban reversed the previous policy established under the Obama administration, which allowed transgender individuals to serve openly.

Key elements of Trump's ban included:

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1. Prohibition on Service: The ban stated that individuals who identify as transgender would not be permitted to enlist or serve in any capacity in the military, citing concerns over military effectiveness and healthcare costs associated with gender transition.
2. Discharge of Existing Service Members: The policy effectively allowed for the discharge of transgender service members who were already serving, although individuals could apply for waivers under certain conditions.
3. Health Care Restrictions: The policy also restricted access to gender-affirming medical care and surgeries for service members, which had been authorized under previous guidelines.
4. Legal Challenges: The ban faced significant backlash and led to multiple legal challenges. Various federal courts issued injunctions against the enforcement of the ban, ultimately leading to a complicated legal landscape regarding the policy.

In January 2021, the Biden administration took steps to reverse the ban, allowing transgender individuals to serve openly in the military once again, reinforcing the commitment to inclusivity and equality in the armed forces.

If you have more questions or would like to explore this topic further, feel free to ask!

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